

Plan Context

The Comprehensive Plan for the City of Gary is a guide for land-use decision making and a framework for future development. The Plan includes goals, objectives, and strategies to improve and develop Gary while enhancing the quality of life for its residents.

Because not all elements of the Plan can be implemented at once, setting implementation priorities based on budgets, resources, and capital improvement programming should be the first focus. This will take a major commitment from City leaders, strong public/private sector cooperation, and input/assistance from Gary citizens, business owners and property owners.

The Future Land Use Plan presented in this document represents land use policies at a large scale. The goals and strategies provide more specific guidelines and direction for infrastructure improvements and private development activity in the key sub-areas. While the final shape, form, and scale of development will be refined, the larger intent of the Comprehensive Plan should be realized when undertaking community improvement and development initiatives.

The following basic action steps, priority projects, and implementation tools are a first approach toward making the Comprehensive Plan a reality. City staff, Plan Commission, and Council members will more specifically define these steps, set more specific priorities, and organize work programs for those actions.

Next Steps

An implementation strategy for the Comprehensive Plan should include a range of activities. Large-scale actions should be prioritized and specific actions based on work programs.

City-Wide Actions

The following are implementation or action steps that are oriented toward the overall City:

Code Changes

Reviewing, updating, and amending City codes that regulate development is a critical first step toward implementing the policies, strategies and land-use direction of the Comprehensive Plan. Updating and streamlining the codes will facilitate the development review and approval process for the City Staff, Plan Commission, Council, businesses, and developers. Zoning changes should especially address:

- Consolidation of isolated retail uses into active retail centers/nodes and rezoning underutilized commercial areas for other uses.
- Transit oriented development, including mix-uses and higher density development.
- Design standards that address high-quality architecture, including building articulation/fenestration, ground level storefronts, and business signage as well as site design, including curb cuts, parking, building setbacks, streetscape/landscape, and sidewalk width.

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Design Review Process

A design review process should be considered to supplement the City's reviews of development plans. Such a function, which could be overseen by a Design Review Board or the Plan Commission, would focus on upgrading the quality of the built environment and facilitating the approval process for new development. The Board or Commission would review projects for their compliance with zoning as well as new design standards.

Property Code Enforcement

Code enforcement procedures and programs should be reviewed and revised to encourage the continued maintenance of homes and businesses. Programs that provide technical and financial assistance to property owners should also be explored.

Capital Improvement Program

A 3 to 5-year capital improvement program should be prepared that addresses the infrastructure enhancements or upgrades recommended in the Comprehensive Plan and necessary for the projected development. This includes water, sewer, stormwater, power, telecommunications, roadway, trail, and other infrastructure improvements needed to improve existing conditions and facilitate future growth.

Beautification Program

A City-wide beautification program should be considered that would encourage individuals, businesses, and local groups to "clean-up and green-up" properties and neighborhoods. The program could help with the planning of beautification projects and assist with volunteer recruitment, provide supplies for clean-up, and coordinate trash pickup. Examples of beautification projects include, litter pickup, graffiti removal, landscaping, and public art.

Citywide Identity/Image

A coordinated City-wide identity program should be considered that would use signage, landscaping, and streetscape improvements to enhance the community's image for residents and visitors. The program could involve a Gary "logo" or branding that would communicate the spirit and identity of the community.

Neighborhood Identity/Groups

Creating distinct identities and associations for each City neighborhood should also be considered. Neighborhood associations, which should include local businesses and institutions, would work closely with City officials to help improve and maintain the new Gary.

Historic Preservation

A building conditions survey should be conducted similar to the 1996 Lake County Interim Report to further assess the overall state of the City's building stock. This survey would be used to develop historic preservation initiatives. The City should seat and enforce the existing Model Ordinance.

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Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative

New housing development should be concentrated in viable neighborhoods that have a relatively low number of vacant properties. Residential blocks, which are mostly vacant and contain only a few houses, should be converted to into a wide variety of open spaces. Residents of these blocks can be relocated to blocks and neighborhoods targeted for infill development. Figure 14.1 highlights the potential to consolidate and strengthen neighborhoods with infill housing and expanded open space systems.

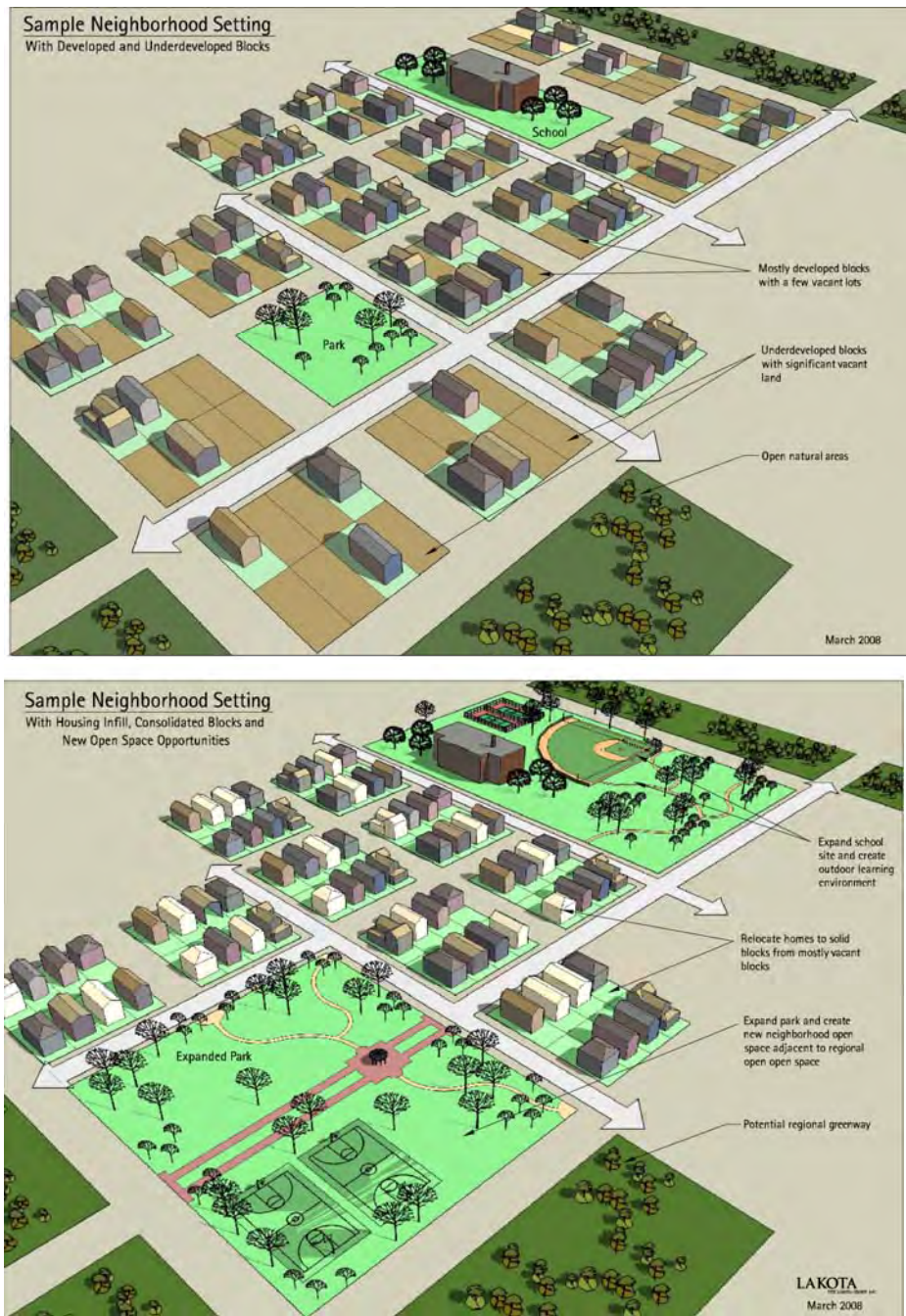


Figure 14.1: Neighborhood Consolidation

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Retail Consolidation/Housing Redevelopment

When retail uses are consolidated at key nodes/intersections, scattered commercial properties can be converted for residential uses and neighborhood buffers. Parkway landscaping can help “soften” the impact of busy arterial roadways, making former retail corridors more suitable for residential redevelopment. Figures 14.2, 14.3, 14.3 and 14.4 provide a range of options for adding housing and landscaping to neighborhood edges along arterial roads. Residential parcels can be turned to front adjacent side streets or onto new internal streets developed on alleys.

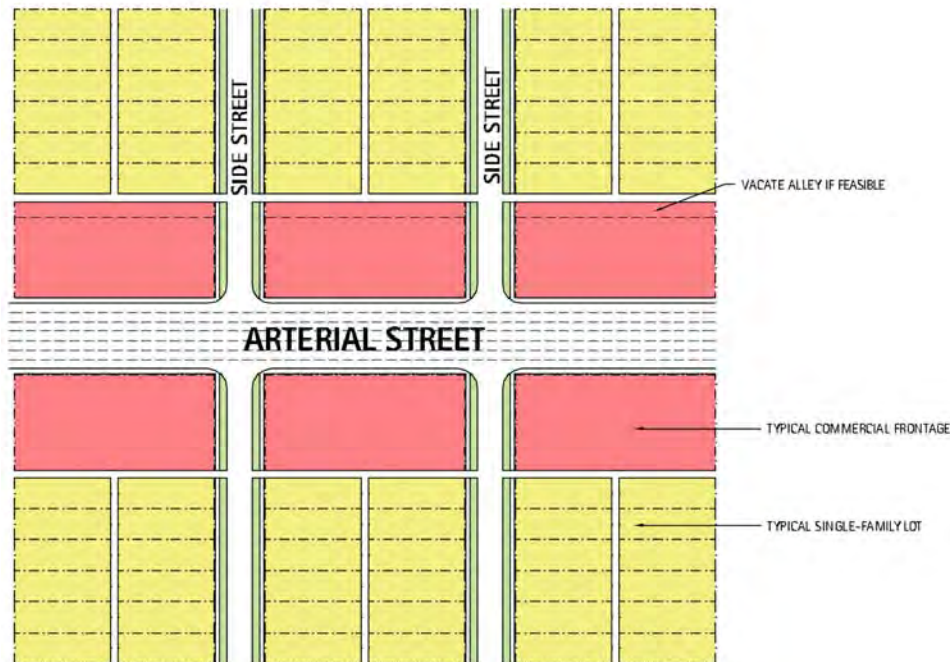


Figure 14.2 Typical Commercial Frontage on Arterial Street

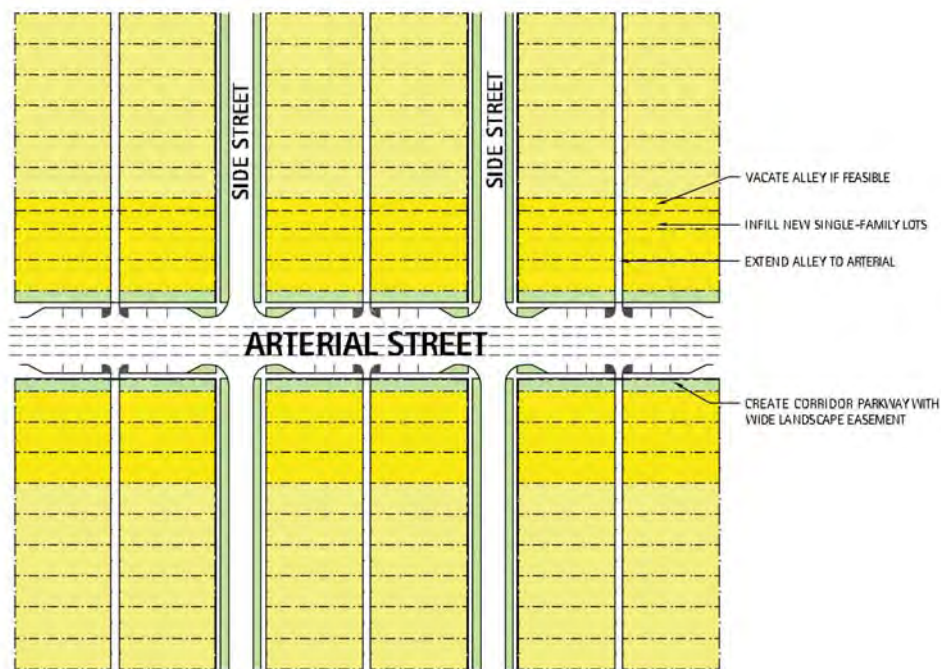


Figure 14.3 Landscaped Parkway with Lots facing Side Streets

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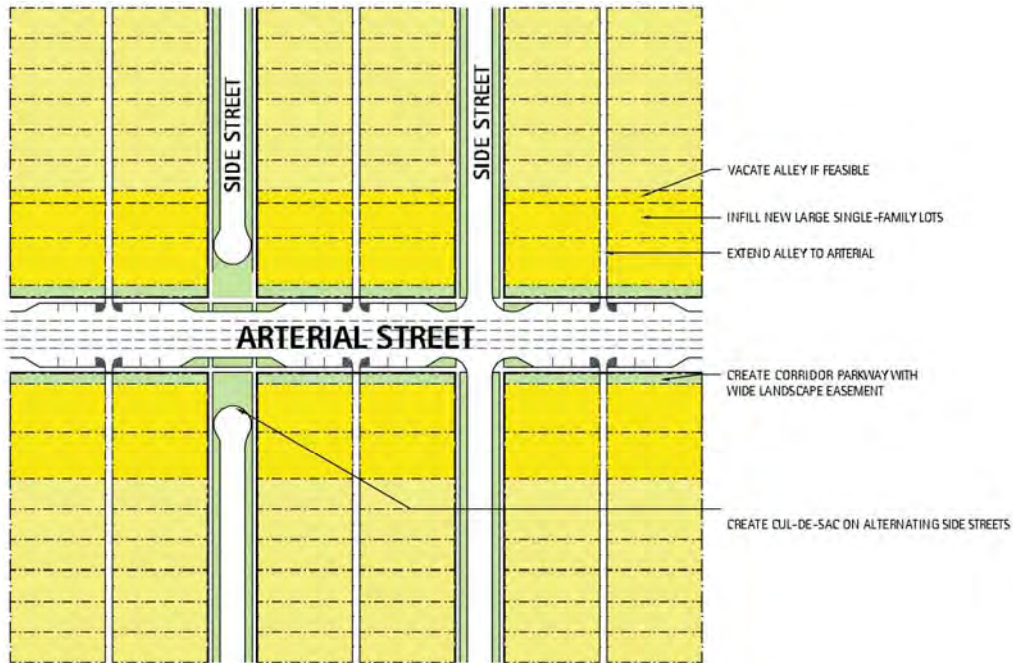


Figure 14.4 Parkway with Lots facing Side Streets & Cul-de-Sacs

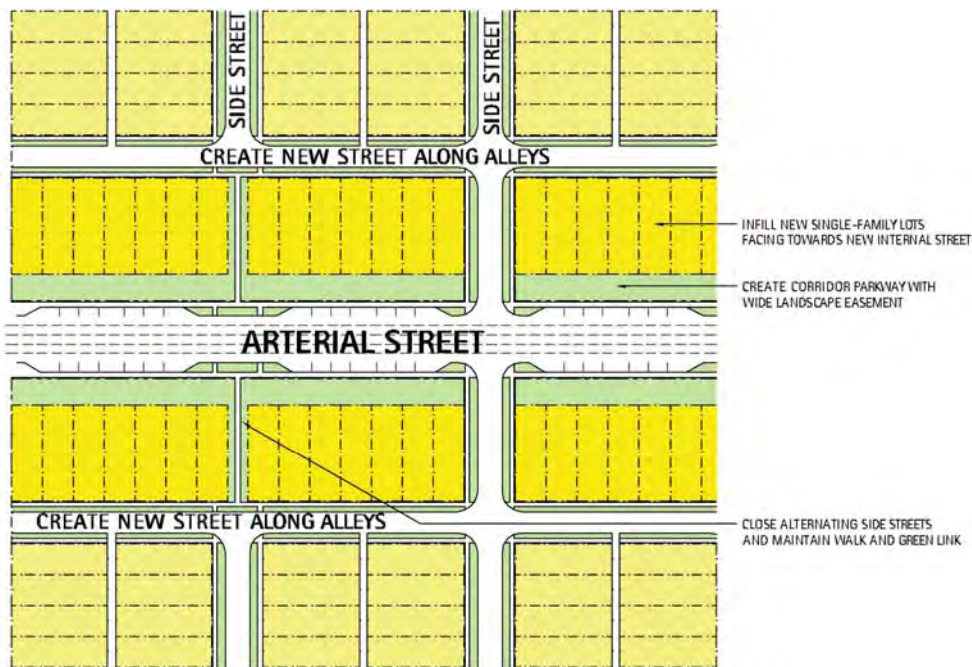


Figure 14.5 Parkway with Lots facing new Internal Streets

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Developer Recruitment

The City should actively solicit developers to implement developments on City-owned property. The City should consider establishing an on-going qualification process for developers that would be pre-qualified to bid on developing City-owned land. As blocks of land become available the City could either seek competitive bids through a Request for Proposals (RFP) or negotiate with these pre-qualified developers.

Priority Projects

An important step toward Comprehensive Plan implementation should be the identification of projects that can be considered priority or “catalytic” projects that would begin to address optimal land-use mix and development opportunities in the City. The following should be considered as priority projects:

Route 912 Business Park Development

The City should undertake the following steps to create a modern business park, possibly with an eco-industrial park theme:

- Building upon the Route 912 Business Park Master Plan, conduct more detailed site analysis including property ownership, potential for inter-modal development, brownfield issues, and infrastructure conditions.
- Refine or update the Master Plan based on current site conditions.
- Establish a tax increment finance (TIF) district to finance infrastructure costs.
- Construct loop roads to allow for internal access to all businesses within the Park.
- Construct gateway features, signage and streetscape improvements to enhance physical conditions.
- Create a brand for the Park that can be used to market it to businesses and developers.
- Expand the Gary-East Chicago-Hammond Empowerment Zone and Gary/Chicago International Airport Development Zone to encompass the Business Park and provide incentives to new businesses and developers including Foreign Trade Zone Benefits.
- Solicit a developer(s) with experience in industrial and business park development to assist in acquisition, infrastructure development, the creation of “shovel-ready” sites and marketing to potential businesses.

Interstate 90/65 Business Park Development

The City should undertake the following steps to create a modern business park:

- Create an implementation-oriented master plan involving developers, land and business owners and other stakeholders that considers property ownership, brownfield issues, access, connectivity, gateway/landscape features, open space and wetland issues.
- Expand the “Midwest Center for Industry” TIF to finance infrastructure development and create “shovel-ready sites.”
- Construct gateway features, signage, and streetscape improvements to unify/enhance the area and establish a brand for the Park.

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- Expand the GECH Empowerment Zone and Gary/Chicago Airport Development Zone to encompass the Business Park and provide incentives to new businesses including Foreign Trade Zone benefits.
- Foster public-private partnerships with property owners and developers to prepare and market sites to potential businesses.

Downtown and Lake Street/Route 12/20 Mixed-use Development

Key steps for implementing mixed-use transit-oriented development at both locations include:

- Create detailed master plans for each that would identify more specific opportunities for promoting transit-oriented development.
- Adopt design standards to ensure that any new development is pedestrian-friendly, incorporates a mix of uses at transit-supportive destinations, and has strong pedestrian linkages to the transit station.
- Improve streetscape, gateway features, and signage to create an area identity and sense of place.
- Consider use of multiple financing sources including Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and Historic Tax Credits for rehabilitation costs and TIF for infrastructure and rehabilitation costs.

Additional strategies for the Downtown include:

- Identify buildings with greatest potential for reuse and foster public-private partnerships to implement reuse development plans that could include a mix of commercial and residential development.
- Identify/create development sites in the entertainment district near U.S. Steel Yard Baseball Stadium. Proactively market sites and/or solicit developers to expand the array of commercial/entertainment uses and develop residential projects to create a critical mass of residential development.
- Pursue development of mixed income rental housing targeted to employees of the casinos, hospitals, public employees, and other employers. Entry level employees may qualify for Section 42 (LIHTC) and others for shallower forms of development assistance.

Additional strategies for the Lake Street/Route 12/20 area include:

- Evaluate potential to consolidate highways to create larger and better accessed development areas.
- Assemble sites for the development of a department and/or grocery store anchored community shopping center.
- Expand Lake Street commercial district and establish strong pedestrian linkages between the existing retail blocks and new commercial development.
- Promote new residential development to create a critical mass of residents within a half-mile radius of the existing transit station.

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Midtown and Downtown Neighborhoods Residential Development

The City should focus on the following strategies to realize new housing development opportunities in the Midtown and Downtown neighborhoods:

- Utilize city-owned land and shallow development assistance to provide middle-income, family ownership housing “niched” just below regional suburban price levels.
- Create larger redevelopable areas by acquiring adjacent vacant/underutilized lots to have a greater revitalizing effect than scattered infill development.
- Develop master plans that incorporate amenities such as parks and community facilities and provide multiple residential product types at various price points to attract a wide range of demographic segments. The City should implement the master plan through a phased approach of incremental projects of 25 to 50 units. It would need to ensure that the development of public infrastructure and amenities keep pace with project absorption.
- Proactively solicit developers to implement individual projects or phases of adopted redevelopment master plans.

Grant Street and I-80/I-94 Commercial Development

The City should further enhance the drawing power of its strongest retail corridor by pursuing the development of larger scale commercial uses along the corridor. Key strategies include:

- Create an inventory of existing vacant sites and storefronts and market directly to developers, brokers, and retailers.
- Identify and prepare sites for the development of a community level shopping center anchored by a department and/or a grocery store.

Create Major Retail Node at Grant and I-80/94:

- The County Market site and the land to its east across Grant are shown to be a viable location for a major discount department store. However, site analysis has suggested the east side as more attractive to store location officials.
- Investigate the feasibility of assembling appropriate site on northeast quadrant of interchange including land ownership, costs of assemblage, and environmental issues.
- If positive, proceed to seek to negotiate options for site.
- Re-initiate contacts with retail developers, brokers, and site representatives to seek to put a developer in place to complete acquisition.
- Establish appropriate redevelopment districts to support project including TIF or other vehicles.

Other I 80/94 Opportunities

Additional opportunities along the Interstate include a major fueling center. This and other commercial initiatives to take advantage of the traffic on this route should continue to be pursued.

Funding

Development Funding

Industrial Development Grant Fund

The Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) provides funds to local governments to assist with infrastructure projects that will lead to job growth or generate capital investment by existing or new businesses. Types of infrastructure projects include the construction of sewers, water lines, roads, sidewalks, rail spurs, and information/high technology infrastructure. Local governments must typically match funds offered by the IEDC.

Certified Technology Park Program

This is a tool provided to the State of Indiana to support the attraction and retention of high-technology businesses. It allows for local recapture of certain State and local taxes, which can be reinvested in a business district or park. A local government must financially participate in the development of the research park and demonstrate a goal of attracting a certain kind of high-tech business.

Shovel Ready Program

This is a program sponsored by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation that assists communities in developing sites by pre-permitting as much as possible. Sites are certified to allow companies to more easily navigate the selection and permitting process.

Brownfields Program

Administered by the Indiana Finance Authority, this program offers financial assistance to local governments for costs related to the redevelopment of brownfields. Low-income loans and petroleum remediation grants are also available.

Community Development Block Grant

The City may apply for federal CDBG funding through the State. Funding can be used to:

- Provide infrastructure to retain/expand businesses that are economic generators.
- Complete economic development plans.
- Attract businesses to downtown and gateway locations.
- Fund public projects to benefit low- and moderate-income residents.
- Finance special projects, including brownfield or downtown development.

Tax Increment Financing District

Tax increment financing (TIF) is a state-authorized program for qualifying redevelopment areas that is usually administered by a municipality. The goal of a TIF is to provide targeted financial resources for properties within a specific redevelopment area/district. TIF Districts are typically structured as follows:

- Property assessed values in the designated district are “frozen” at a base level to represent the base value.

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- Government entities with property taxing authority in the area continue to receive tax revenue generated from the “base value.”
- The incremental assessed value created by new development, improvements, or adjustments in market value is taxed at the overall rate levied by governments.
- The tax revenue generated from the incremental property value is distributed to the TIF fund administered by the City to pay for eligible redevelopment costs.

A portion of funds made available through a TIF district could be allocated for certain construction/rehab costs as well as transportation infrastructure improvements including roadway widening, traffic signals, pedestrian/bicycle facilities, and more. TIF can also be used in the context of this plan to support land acquisition, infrastructure, and site preparation for new housing and commercial development projects identified in the plan.

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

DDAs are an additional state-enabled program that allow communities to use tax increment financing to fund infrastructure improvements and large-scale projects in downtown areas.

Economic Improvement District (EID)

An EID is a special purpose district in which property owners agree to collect an additional fee to fund improvements in the district that are intended to support their businesses. Improvements may include infrastructure, such as streetscapes, lighting, and public art; services such as security and landscape maintenance; or staff dedicated to managing and marketing the district. EID's are most frequently used to provide support to commercial districts (typically downtowns) and increase retail opportunities.

Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits

The National Park Service offers up to a 20% tax credit towards the restoration of historic properties eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Impact Fees

Many communities throughout the country use impact fees, or one-time charges to developers, to fund parks, schools and roadways. The fee amount is generally derived from a formula that incorporates the amount of impact the development will generate. The City should consider such fees as it crafts its funding strategy to implement the Plan.

Transportation Funding

To meet transportation objectives and proceed with area improvement projects, it is important to identify funding sources in addition to the City's capital budgets. A sample of potential funding sources is provided below.

CMAQ

The federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program directs funds for a broad range of projects that will help improve air quality. Potential projects may include traffic flow enhancement, coordinated and optimized traffic signal systems, developing pedestrian/bicycle facilities, vehicle emission reduction programs, and transit services.

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Surface Transportation Program

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) has a program by which local Indiana governments may receive federal funds for a variety of transportation projects. This federal program has several subcategories, including Transportation Enhancements and Hazard Elimination Program. This program can be used to fund a wide range of projects such as infrastructure maintenance, roadway extensions, safety improvements, preservation of abandoned railway corridors for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improvement of crosswalks, and intersection/roadway improvements.

Recreational Trails Program

The federal Recreational Trails Program provides funding to improve and develop non-motorized recreational facilities and open space, such as pedestrian and bicycle paths. This program is a potential funding source to help implement the Green Link plan.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

INDOT awards federal money to schools and communities for projects and activities to make walking and biking to school safe, simple, and enjoyable for children in grades kindergarten through eighth. Examples of funded projects include sidewalk installation/repair, improved crosswalks, installation of pull-off areas, safe biking and walking outreach programs and development of a comprehensive Safe Routes plan.

Sustainable Development

A “green theme” for existing and future industrial development should be considered to make Gary a more sustainable city, and to possibly attract attention and funding from a variety of sources. The leading environmental and sustainability best practices should be adopted throughout the City’s codes, programs, and initiatives. In addition to sustainable industries, brownfields can be transformed into new open space, cultural sites, or commercial and residential development with proper remediation. The following is a brief overview of some notable practices and case studies.

Eco-Industrial Networks/Parks

Eco-industrial networks and parks are locations where connections are created to improve environmental health and industrial efficiency through the sharing of materials, products, knowledge, and wastes on local and regional scales. Participants in such networks often include businesses, local governments, and educational institutions. Such networks can be economically beneficial through cost savings, competitiveness, increased revenue generation, and increased access to technology and human resources. Types of activities that are part of a larger eco-industrial network or within a specific site considered as an eco-industrial park include:

- Using waste heat from one facility to heat or cool other facilities.
- Creating electricity in combination with other products, such as steam generation.
- Using waste from one facility as a resource in another facility.
- Developing a central energy plant to heat or cool all facilities in an area, such as an industrial park.

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Eco-industrial parks have been operating successfully for over 30 years. The oldest was established in Kalundberg, Denmark. North American examples include Sarnia, Ontario; Calgary, Alberta; and Devens, Massachusetts.

Resource Recovery Park

Resource recovery parks act as nodes or centers for businesses that operate reuse, recycling, and composting facilities in one central location. They are more efficient because they often allow such businesses to operate at a higher economy of scale or share buildings, administration, or sites. Such parks can also act as a central location for businesses or the public to drop-off or purchase materials. Examples of resource recovery parks include the Cabazon Resource Recovery Park in Mesa, California and Monterey Regional Environmental Park in Marina, California.

Wind/Solar Energy

Wind turbines and solar panel fields are examples of sustainable energy that can be accommodated in industrial parks to generate electricity, reducing reliance on non-sustainable sources of electricity generation.

For example, Sharp's new plant in Kameyama Japan includes over 600 transparent, thin-film solar cells within the curtain walls of the building. During the day, they generate electricity while allowing light to pass through. These solar cells also have a moderate shading effect that cuts heat gain from solar radiation and helps reduce the electricity needed for air conditioning. The plant also utilizes a cogeneration system that utilizes waste heat from air conditioning to supply approximately one-third of the annual energy used.

The recent renovation of Ford's River Rouge complex outside of Detroit included photovoltaic panels on the new visitor's center, to turn sunlight into electricity to supplement the building's power supply and solar collectors on the ground heat water for the building. The new truck manufacturing facility has a 10.4-acre "living roof," which is designed to keep the plant warmer in winter and cooler in summer with sedum plants absorbing and filtering water from rain and snow, absorbing carbon dioxide and giving off oxygen.

Former industrial sites can also be used to generate alternative energy sources that can be put back into a community's power grid. For example, 30 acres of the former Bethlehem Steel site in Lackawanna, New York, is being redeveloped as a wind farm. The site, which is adjacent to Lake Erie, will generate 20 megawatts, enough electricity to power 6,000 homes.

Green Space

The conversion of deteriorated underdeveloped residential blocks, industrial/commercial properties and brownfields into new open space is a major component of the Gary Comprehensive Plan. New open space can provide valuable aesthetic, recreational, and quality-of-life benefits.

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In Seattle, Washington for example, the site of a heavily-polluted gasification plant that closed in 1962 was transformed into the 19-acre Gasworks public park on Lake Union. The park retains the historical character of the site by preserving several pieces of the old plant.

Some communities have also looked at inactive railroads for use as greenways or trails. In Chicago's West Town neighborhood, a local community group, Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail, were committed to building community consensus and support for converting the abandoned Bloomingdale railroad line into an elevated trail. The group has been working with the Trust for Public Land to acquire vacant lots along the trail to serve as access points. They are also working with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to receive federal funding for design and engineering work.

In addition to new park space, school campuses, nature preserves, and recreational greenways, communities have been successful in improving vacant land as community gardens or urban agriculture plots, which have in turn helped to foster a sense of community and ownership of the space. Urban agriculture can also help keep food sources closer to home and provides more healthy food products to lower income communities.

For example, the Green Thumb program of New York City's Parks and Recreation Department has used such grants to create 650 member gardens throughout the city's five boroughs. It also provides technical assistance, training, materials, and direct grants to neighborhood garden clubs. An estimated 4.5 acres of greenfields are preserved for every acre of redeveloped brownfields.

In Chicago's Englewood neighborhood, the Growing Home project spearheaded an effort to assemble vacant land to create the Wood Street Urban Farm. The project is aimed as helping homeless and low-income people gain job training and employment opportunities through the context of non-profit organic agriculture business. The Wood Street Urban Farm has provided an important resource for job training and community outreach, serving as a community center and an integral part of the community's revitalization.

Brownfield Museums

Brownfield sites can serve as locations to highlight a community's history either by preserving existing structures or by creating new structures. Examples include:

- Tacoma, Washington: A \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment Pilot from the EPA enabled the City of Tacoma to study economic growth and redevelopment of brownfields along a major industrial inlet. The grant led to the cleanup of 1.6-acre site and development of the Museum of Glass, featuring the works of acclaimed local glass artist, Dale Chihuly. The project serves as a foundation for future redevelopment in the area.
- Fayetteville, North Carolina: The City of Fayetteville transformed a 6.6-acre downtown brownfield site that had once contained service stations, car lots, and a publishing company into the Airborne and Special Operations Museum. The museum is spurring further downtown development, including a new performing arts center on a larger brownfield site.

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- Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: A former Bethlehem Steel plant is being redeveloped as the National Museum of Industrial History, part of the Smithsonian Institution's Affiliation Program.
- Providence, Rhode Island: The Heritage Harbor Museum will convert the massive, obsolete South Street power plant into a museum emphasizing Rhode Island history and communities as part of the Smithsonian Institution's Affiliation Program.

Residential/Commercial Redevelopment

Brownfields in other cities have been redeveloped with other uses as well. Examples include:

- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: The 42-acre Washington's Landing at Herr Island was a major meatpacking center with soil and groundwater highly contaminated with polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons and polychlorinated biphenyls. Using \$70 million in public and private investments, the site is now a mixed-use center with commercial, manufacturing and residential uses.
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: A former 238-acre steel mill slag dump is being transformed into a residential neighborhood called Summerset at Frick Park. The \$243 million project required stabilization of the slag, revegetation, and environmental clean-up and will generate \$2.4 million in property taxes.
- Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: This former steel mill represents 20% of the City's tax base. In addition to the 1100 megawatts clean burning power plant, a 115-acre multimodal terminal, and 110-acre greenway project, 1,600 acres will be developed into the commercial and industrial Bethlehem Commerce Park. An additional 163 acres will become a riverfront renaissance district with a movie theatre, ice skating center, entertainment establishments, and an industrial museum.

LEED

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) to provide a set of standards for environmentally sustainable construction. The standards address six general categories, including sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, indoor environmental quality, and innovation and design processes.

The USGBC has a variety of rating systems that pertain to various forms of construction and developments. One of the newer rating systems is the LEED for Neighborhood Development Program (LEED-ND). LEED-ND is currently under a pilot program and is expected to be released to the public in early 2009. LEED-ND provides guidelines and standards on sustainable development, smart growth, and green design on a neighborhood-wide level and was created in collaboration with the Congress for New Urbanism and National Resources Defense Council.